

UNRAVELING THE MULTIFACETED CONCEPT OF HAPPINESS: INSIGHTS FROM ETYMOLOGY, DICTIONARIES, AND RUSSIAN POETRY

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Abstract

In this article, we investigate the concept of happiness from etymological and explanatory dictionaries, as well as Russian poetry, to gain a deeper understanding of its various dimensions and sources. Happiness is consistently compared to light and fire, illustrating its ephemeral and illuminating qualities. Our analysis reveals that happiness can be defined as a positive emotional state arising from a favorable evaluation of one's own destiny. Perspectives on happiness can be classified according to the source, such as external goods, pleasant feelings, cherished work, family, and altruistic interests, which act as factors contributing to happiness. We conclude that happiness is primarily a mental state, heavily influenced by an individual's life attitudes and expectations. This insight into the concept of happiness can serve as a foundation for further exploration of its psychological and sociocultural implications, as well as the development of strategies to promote happiness and well-being in various contexts.

Keywords: category, happiness, cumulative model, hedonic model, source of happiness, mythological thinking

The concept of happiness encompasses a multi-dimensional, integrative psychological construct that involves both an overarching axiological evaluation, as well as an affective appraisal in terms of joy or contentment. It has been posited that the cognitive existence of such abstract categories within ordinary linguistic cognition is predominantly intuitive, with these notions lacking discursive representation in this context [7].

Individuals generally possess a clear understanding of happiness until they are prompted to articulate it (e.g., "What is time? If no one inquires, I am aware of what time signifies; yet, if I attempt to explain it to the questioner, I am at a loss" [1]). However, employing the term "intuitive" in relation to happiness may not be analogous to the figurative sense, as it proves challenging to depict happiness visually. Nonetheless, through the application of a Socratic "maieutic" method involving guiding questions, it is possible to elicit a verbal definition from the respondent.

The cumulative model, which emphasizes the objective aspect of happiness and finds parallels within the scientific paradigm, is primarily exemplified by the notion of hedonism (enjoyment), situating the "origin of happiness" external to the individual. According to this perspective, happiness constitutes the aggregation of diverse and ephemeral pleasures that induce joy, varying only in their intensity. This concept contrasts happiness with misfortune, which is characterized by sorrow and distress: "I was content: I serenely relished / My labor, accomplishment, and renown..." (Pushkin); "Fortunate! from the worldly pleasures attainable / You were able to seize / All that renders our fate resplendent" (Nekrasov); "Blissful individuals! How delightful they are!" (Nekrasov); "All remains as it once was, jovial, blissful, / I capture the undulations of your streamers" (Fet).

A "diminished" variation of the hedonic model, distinguished from the latter by the absence of an evaluative operator, may be regarded as the concept of tranquility (Epicurean), which posits happiness as the liberation from physical suffering and emotional turmoil, yielding satisfaction and a steady, placid disposition. In this context, happiness is essentially equivalent to the absence of misfortune: "Find happiness in serenity, / Sincerely cheerful" (Karamzin); "Now I possess peace and happiness" (Akhmatova); "Then the unease of my soul dissipates, / Then the furrows on my brow vanish, - / And I grasp the notion of earthly happiness, / And in the heavens, I behold God" (Lermontov); "Exhaustion perceives happiness in borscht, / Emerging from the river rafting and logging. / And what is happiness in its entirety? / Weariness from enduring suffering" (Yevtushenko); "Blessed is the one who is unacquainted with wine, / Whose soul is as pure as an infant's!" (Zhukovsky).

Within the Russian poetic consciousness, Aristotle's concept is more or less consistently represented, wherein the source of happiness is the sublime activity in the fullness of virtue. Naturally, while for the Stagirite the highest form of activity is philosophy, for poets it is the art of poetic creation: "Fortunate is the one who relishes the delight / Of noble thoughts and poetry!" (Pushkin); "Blessed! You have dedicated your days to the muses" (Baratynsky). However, more frequently, the elements of happiness are enumerated, and their combination depends solely on the author's personal inclinations: "He possessed all that was necessary / For happiness: both peace of mind, / And wealth, and honor" (Nekrasov); "I am happy - with my serenity, / I am happy - with your companionship" (Batyushkov).

Lastly, it is worth mentioning a collection of perspectives on happiness, rather than concepts per se, which are characterized by a "fortunate nihilism." These range from outright denial of happiness's existence to lamentations about its illusory nature, fleetingness, and infrequency in life's journey: "There is no happiness in the world," "happiness is a deceptive specter" (Pushkin); "Delusive happiness, / Gradual sorrow" (Bryusov); "In our dreams, in our desires / We find happiness solely" (Karamzin); "What could be swifter than love and happiness? / Like a moment, their time will elapse" (Karamzin); "How rare happiness is! And how unjust / The notions about it!" (Karamzin); "... our happiness is merely a flash, / Just a distant, feeble glimmer. / It flickers for us so seldom, / Demanding such toil! / It extinguishes so swiftly / And vanishes for eternity! / Regardless of how you cradle it in your hands, / And how tightly you embrace it, - / The child of dawn, on radiant steeds / Will hasten away to a distant realm!" (Zabolotsky).

In this context, true happiness is only attainable beyond the confines of earthly existence: "We shall ascend to the realms of bliss, / Where neither illness nor death exist" (Karamzin). In this life, happiness is either an obstacle ("I understood that a person is unhappy, / Because they seek the happiness they desire" - Yevtushenko; "Oh happiness! Wicked deceiver" - Pushkin) or, conversely, belief in it serves as salvation and support ("The wealth of life - faith in happiness" - Baratynsky). Regarding the prevalence of various conceptual models of happiness in poetic texts, the concept of tranquility is foremost, followed by, in descending order, love, youth, freedom, contrast, pleasure, friendship, nature, and passion. Nihilistic views on happiness are fairly widespread. The frequency ranking of all other core models of happiness is comparatively low.

Based on etymological sources, happiness is defined as "a favorable portion or share" (according to Shansky N.M.'s dictionary) [6], or "a positive destiny" (according to Fasmer M.'s dictionary) [5]. The

concept of happiness as a state of mind, distinct from advantageous life circumstances, is a relatively recent development in cultural history. Initially, individuals favored by the gods were deemed happy, giving rise to the notion of "good fortune."

Following the decline of mythological thought, the mythologeme of "fate" becomes desacralized. The position of "deity" is supplanted by "coincidence" or "chance," transforming "good fortune" into "favorable opportunity," "providence," or "luck," which inherently embodies an impersonal element of fortune. Overall, it is noteworthy that the evolution of the concept of "happiness" reveals a consistent trend towards subjectivization. Initially, happiness is equated to "fate" or "destiny," then to "chance" or "luck"—external factors independent of an individual—and finally, to an individual's actions, virtuous deeds, or accomplishments. Whether or not someone is virtuous depends solely on their will, and in this sense, "everyone is the architect of their own happiness."

In the explanatory dictionaries of the Russian language, the term "happiness" is a multifaceted concept. The lexeme "happiness" encompasses two to four meanings. The original definition, "fate, portion, destiny," which is listed first in V.I. Ushakov's dictionary entry, is relegated to the final position ("Such is our happiness that we stand on the bridge with a cup") [4]. The meaning reflecting the conditions of an individual's external well-being, contingent upon the whims of chance, is ranked second in all dictionaries: "success, luck" (in S.I. Ozhegov's dictionary) [3]; "success, fortuitous luck" (in D.N. Ushakov's dictionary "The sun does not always shine, happiness is not always fortunate" (N.A. Nekrasov)); "coincidence, a welcome surprise, luck, success" (in V.I. Dahl's dictionary).

In D.N. Ushakov's dictionary, the third position is occupied by the concept of "happiness," primarily associated with a highly favorable assessment ("Indeed, it's happiness to have such a son" Griboyedov; "Happiness that everything turned out so well"). In Ozhegov's dictionary, "happiness" conveys a positive appraisal of a statement, expressing satisfaction about something: "I laughed inwardly, but fortunately, he didn't notice this" (M.Yu. Lermontov).

An examination of dictionary definitions leads to the conclusion that the term "happiness" in the Russian language possesses a well-defined meaning. Dictionaries provide a generalized characterization of happiness: luck, destiny, fate, and well-being. Variations in the definition of happiness are also influenced by the dual usage of the word "happiness." Depending on the evaluative framework, two "varieties" or levels of happiness can be distinguished. Firstly, happiness encompasses the "absence of misfortune," opposing adversity. According to the internal logic of this form of happiness, the fewer expectations and hopes an individual harbors in life, the happier they can become. The second form of happiness is defined as the joy experienced by an individual.

All life activities consist of two components: action (expenditure of vital energy and effort) and rest (renewal of vital energy). The second form of happiness is directly connected to an individual's active nature, the pursuit of and satisfaction derived from emotional fulfillment. Joy, which serves as the emotional foundation of the second form of happiness, contrasts with boredom, a negative mood.

Frequently, happiness is compared to light, with its dawning and glowing qualities, as well as to fire and combustible materials, capable of burning or being ignited: "It's enough for me to soar with my soul / To its heavenly heights, / Where happiness occasionally dawns on us, / But is not meant for us" (Blok); "Not for a century, not for an hour, the mollusk floats, / Tormented by the radiance of happiness" (Pasternak); "There are many different sufferings, / But the light of bliss is singular" (Balmont); "I burned happiness, but I didn't know if I wouldn't ignite it even more intensely"

(Balmont); "And the soul has been scorched with happiness / Since then" (Gumilyov); "And friendship is powerless here, and years / High and fiery happiness" (Akhmatova).

Following the analysis of etymological and explanatory dictionaries as well as Russian poetry, happiness can be defined as a positive emotional state resulting from a favorable evaluation of one's own destiny. Perspectives on happiness can be categorized primarily based on its source: external goods, pleasant feelings, cherished work, family, altruistic interests, and so forth, which serve as happiness factors. Consequently, happiness is predominantly a mental state, heavily reliant on an individual's life attitudes and expectations.

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